

Ambassador International Academy

Language Policy

Ambassador International Academy (AIA) - Mission Statement

Inspire our children to be passionate global lifelong learners through an enriched holistic international curriculum that encourages them to **inquire** and **innovate** while proactively contributing in meaningful ways to the world.

Vision

Ambassador International Academy is dedicated to creating responsible universal citizens who would be bright leaders of the 21st century by laying a superior foundation through quality education.

Our Values

Accountable for children's learning, overall well-being and holistic development

Maintain quality standards across the entire organization

Broaden the horizons of our children's experience and knowledge

Attend to the child's individual learner potential

Safe and collaborative learning community

Sensitive to the needs of students of determination

Adopt modern instructional strategies

Documentation to make learning visible

Outstanding teaching and commitment to research

Relevant real world education aligned to the child's life experience

IB Mission statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end, the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

Aim

The International Baccalaureate® (IB) and Ambassador International Academy is committed to supporting multilingualism as a fundamental part of increasing intercultural understanding and international-mindedness and is equally committed to extending access to an IB education for students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. All teachers in AIA are teachers of language and we firmly believe that language must be valued as it's an expression of learners' culture and it represents their identity. We are committed to support our learners' mother tongue and reinforce cultural identity as we believe that its crucial for their development and success. The AIA team is committed to implement this policy as it represents a framework of language learning, teaching and assessing of AIA learners.

Purpose

The policy focuses on the school's language provision. AIA being a truly international school our learners have rich and complex multilingual backgrounds. This means a large number of our learners must access the majority of the programme in a language other than their mother tongue. A thorough understanding of how this situation impacts learning is essential if we are to maximize student progress and attainment. This policy is designed to ensure that the value of learner diversity is not lost, that there is equal access to the curriculum for all learners, that students participate fully and are able to reach their full potential.

Language is involved in all learning and is an essential vehicle for inquiry and the construction of meaning. It provides an intellectual framework to support conceptual understanding, creative and critical thinking. We believe that the need to communicate is instinctive. The development of language is fundamental to that need; it supports and enhances our thinking and understanding. Language permeates the world in which we live; it is socially constructed and dependent on the number and nature of our social interactions and relationships.

The learning process simultaneously involves learning language—as learners listen to and use language with others in their everyday lives; learning about language—as learners grow in their understanding of how language works; and learning through language—as learners use language as a tool to listen, think, discuss and reflect on information, ideas and issues (Halliday 1980).

- Learning language

In the early stages when a child is first learning to communicate in a mother tongue, he or she is learning to use language symbolically to construct meaning and to interact. The child is also developing basic interpersonal communicative skills. The language of such communication is supported by contextual cues as well as by gestures and facial expressions. Learners who already have communicative skills in a mother tongue may become functional in social communication in another language within two years because of the transfer of understanding already in place. Learning language is ongoing and is further fostered through reading.

- Learning through language

At some point a child has enough language so that in addition to it being a communicative tool, it is also a flexible resource for further learning and cognitive growth. Language itself, rather than direct concrete experience, can be used to negotiate new meanings and construct knowledge about the world. Literacy becomes increasingly important in doing this as more abstract learning takes place through academic texts in school where children develop a cognitive academic language proficiency.

- Learning about language

Understanding the relationship of language and meaning and how language works in the construction of knowledge empowers the language user. A learner in Ambassador International Academy will develop a critical language awareness and will be able to make choices about language use according to his or her purpose and audience, as well as gain insight into the language choices of others.

At AIA we believe that use of mother tongue language should be respected, therefore students are encouraged/permitted to use their mother tongue in classes and outside. We encourage the parents to read, write and talk to the children in their mother tongue. However, in order to facilitate the rapid development of English language skills to access the curriculum we do also strongly recommend families and students to use English as much as possible.

Languages used in Ambassador International Academy:

Instruction language: English

Communication language (*with parents*): English/Arabic

Printed and electronic communication language: English/Arabic

Communication with visitors: English/Arabic

Communication with support staff/housekeeping: English

Communication with administrative staff: English

Student language profiles

The complex and diverse language profiles among students may mean that they are learning in a language additional to that of their home and family, or of their prior educational experience. School may be the first time that students encounter an additional language, or they may already be proficient in several languages. Some students are familiar with the language of their school while, for others, the values, beliefs and behaviours around language and literacy are new. During admission, data is collected which identifies the student's mother tongue, language used at home, language used for instruction at previous schools and any other languages known.

Teaching and Learning Practices

All teachers in AIA are teachers of language and as such have a responsibility to address the language needs of their students in the language of instruction. When teachers plan learning experiences that enable students to develop language within meaningful and enjoyable contexts, students make connections, apply their learning, and transfer their conceptual understanding to new situations.

Teachers should:

- Identify prior knowledge through various strategies such as KWL (what I know, what I want to know and what I have learned) charts, mind maps, concept cartoons etc. and modify their teaching strategies.
- Plan a variety of engaging lessons with clear objectives and outcomes (success criteria).
- Incorporate strategies to cater to the learning needs of all students including SOD (Students of determination), Able, gifted and talented) AGT and ELL (English Language Learners).
- Use individualised resources to enable all learners to access the planned learning experience and achieve the lesson outcome.
- Use a variety of Assessment for Learning strategies to assess learning, identify gaps and accordingly support/challenge students in every lesson.
- Give positive and constructive written and oral feedback identifying achievements and setting targets using appropriate language.
- Promote a growth mindset to encourage students to face challenges and encourage them to progress at their own pace to achieve the outcome.
- Incorporate self and peer evaluation to further embed learning.
- Create opportunities for students to work collaboratively, according to their needs, nature of the activity and the learning objective.
- Publish student work.

- Encourage parental engagement.

Students should be encouraged to:

- Use language as a mode of thinking, reflecting and self - expression.
- Learn to speak, read and write English progressing across a continuum of skills.
- Confidently express themselves in English in a variety of situations.
- Develop an appreciation of a variety of literature and texts.
- Evaluate evidence and think critically regarding their use of language.
- Connect different areas of language learning to integrate prior and new knowledge.

Support for English as the Language of Instruction

We aim to develop a level of language proficiency in English that enables all students to perform to the best of their ability on all tasks related to the extensive curriculum across the school. Initially, students may choose to think or talk through unfamiliar or complex concepts in their first language to assist their understanding. Students are encouraged to communicate with their peers in a way that will not result in some students being excluded because they cannot understand a language. We use different teaching techniques to ensure that students for whom English is not their mother tongue understand all concepts during lessons. We expect teachers to use regular questioning to check student understanding during tasks throughout each lesson. Teachers will, where appropriate, group students of different mother tongues and English language abilities to enable sharing of information. Teachers acknowledge students' diversity in language and support their progress with adapted and or translated resources on an individual basis.

Support for the host country

As mandated by the Ministry of Education, all Arab country passport holders will study Arabic A (first language) until Grade 12 and all non-Arab passport holders will study Arabic B (second language) until Grade 9. The host country language of Arabic shall be integrated within unit plans where applicable. Students will be encouraged to explore the Arabic language and UAE culture when discussing literary texts in lessons and when commenting on language features. Writing competitions, such as the Emirates Literature Festival, challenge students to draw upon the host country's language and culture to produce a variety of poetry and short stories. Recitation of verses from the Quran and poetry written in Arabic are recited frequently at assemblies and other school events.

Students are familiarized with Arabic language around the school. National events such as UAE National Day and International Day are observed appropriately and are integrated within appropriate unit plans to celebrate the culture and diversity of the host country.

Differentiation and Personalization/Individualization

Teachers are expected to cater to the needs of high, middle and lower ability students through outcome, task, resources or support. They are expected to use further personalized strategies based on individual needs of students, which are determined through the triangulation of teacher observations, internal formative and summative assessments and benchmark assessments such as: (CAT4, PT, Arabic Benchmark Tests (ABT)).

Based on the individual needs of students, IEPs (Individual Education Plans) are created with individualized goals and strategies to ensure all students make optimum progress from their individual starting points. A range of diagnostic assessments are used to identify AGT students as well as those requiring extra personalized support through intervention or inclusion support.

In the Secondary School, students are placed in Language Acquisition classes according to the IB's continuum of language learning phases. The school has a placement policy that allows student movement (typically at the end of the academic year) in relation to student progression along this continuum. In English, students will be set in mixed ability groups to allow for widely differentiated lessons and activities.

Support for Students of Determination (SODs)

Teachers create learning opportunities and provide support with communication and literacy through personalised strategies based on the needs of individual students.

- **Level 1/wave1 students/universal students** – teachers provide support through high quality teaching and learning activities in the classroom environment, accommodating individual differences in ability, learning preferences and behaviour. On-going and timely assessments are conducted to help identify if any further provision is needed.
- **Level 2/wave2/ targeted support** – in collaboration with the inclusion department, a targeted support plan for each student is used by teachers. In-class support and/or curriculum modification/differentiation/accommodations may be provided to enable a student to engage with, and participate in, appropriately challenging learning experiences. Withdrawal sessions

(working in small groups with an adult outside of the classroom environment) are provided if the support deemed necessary cannot be delivered within the classroom environment.

- **Level 3/ wave 3/ specialist support** - Individualized programme to accelerate progress or enable students to achieve their potential. Such programmes are likely to include one or more of the following:
 - Specific support from outside professionals for specialist interventions targeting clinically diagnosed needs.
 - An IEP (Individualised Education Plan) is prepared by the inclusion team which will provide detailed strategies of support for differentiation, modification and accommodation.
 - In-class support provided by the LSA

Teachers personalize teaching and learning strategies by:

- Using texts that children can read and understand.
- Using visual and written materials in different formats.
- Using ICT, other technological aids and recorded materials.
- Using teaching assistants to facilitate personalized learning where appropriate.
- Using specialists in the learning support department where appropriate.

Support for ELL Students (English Language Learners)

The mother tongue or first language is the one that the individual is most proficient in and is often the language used at home. The development of the first language is encouraged through an ethos of acceptance and celebration of linguistic diversity within the community. There is also recognition that a strong level of competency in the first language can be an important ingredient in a student's success as a learner of an additional language. We recognise the need for English to be spoken in both formal and informal contexts to ensure development of language skills as a school using English as the main medium of delivery. English Language Learning (ELL) refers to English instruction that is given to assist students in gaining sufficient English language proficiency to cope within the English-speaking environment.

Students receive additional individualised or small group English and academic support scheduled as appropriate within their timetable. ELL students may also receive support in their grade level and subject area classes from qualified staff. ELL staff provide in-class support and co-teaching for humanities, science, and mathematics classes whenever possible. Additionally, ELL students will be

supported through the provision of English Language Acquisition in MYP. This course develops students' language and literacy skills in English as well as intercultural competence. The English Language Acquisition classes are scheduled against the English Language and Literature classes in the timetable. Depending on students' ability, age and rate of language acquisition, the ELL department strives to transition students to English Language and Literature as soon as a student has the skills to be successful.

Support for Able, Gifted and Talented (AGT) Students

Students who have been identified as Able, Gifted and Talented attempt differentiated, more challenging activities in class. Teachers use strategies that further encourage vocabulary development, reading and writing across the curriculum, and expose AGT students to more advanced forms of literature and informational texts. Teachers will choose texts to suit the ability levels in the classroom. Teachers work with other specialists in order to ensure continuity of the delivery.

Support for Mother Tongue

During classroom instructions, students are encouraged to communicate in the language of instruction. However, outside classroom mother tongue is encouraged through activities such as (International Day, assemblies, field trips and student presentations).

If a student wishes to study a language and literature or an additional language acquisition subject which is not offered by the school, they can study their mother tongue language outside of school time.

Support Learning of an Additional Language

Host Country Language

Arabic is taught to students from grade 1 onwards in accordance with the MOE requirements for Arab passport holders to learn first language Arabic (A) and second language Arabic (B) is taught to non-Arab passport holder students. In addition, Arabic studies is offered to students in KG1 and KG2.

Foreign Language Acquisition

In KG 2 all students learn French as a second language. From Gr 1 upwards, throughout the school students learn either French or Spanish.

Language Development in the Context of the IB Learner Profile

In line with IB Programmes, the language programme not only helps students to gain an instrumental means of communication, it helps them develop the cognitive, emotional and attitudinal skills which promote a well-balanced and holistic education. We strive for students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to be:

1. **Inquirers:** They use language as their prime medium of inquiry to make sense of the world around them.
2. **Thinkers:** They use language precisely and skillfully in the context of higher-level thinking to express their thoughts and ideas clearly and succinctly.
3. **Communicators:** They are confident users of oral and written language in a variety of situations.
4. **Risk-takers:** They attempt to read, write and speak in situations where they may not feel totally competent.
5. **Knowledgeable:** They understand the internal structures of language and the various influences on its development. They have experience with a wide range of literature and acquire the vocabulary and understanding to discuss different literary styles.
6. **Principled:** They are aware that language is powerful, that it can have a profound effect and that it must be used responsibly.
7. **Caring:** They show responsible and respectful behaviour towards the use of diverse languages, and they value literature for the insight it gives into the feelings of others.
8. **Open-minded:** They respect differences and similarities between languages and dialects. They are aware of the use of language as an expression of bias and strive to maintain an objective stance.
9. **Well-balanced:** They are aware of the need for an educated person to be an effective communicator. They use literature for both learning and leisure.
10. **Reflective:** They reflect upon their own levels of language development in their mother tongue and other languages. They consciously work at improving their language proficiency.

Links to the IB Approaches to Learning

Through approaches to learning (ATL) in the IB programmes, students develop skills that have relevance across the curriculum that help them “learn how to learn”. ATL skills provide a solid foundation for learning independently and with others. The ATL skills are interconnected across subjects and students are expected to develop all strands. The following ATLs have been identified

as vital components of language learning in both helping a student develop language skills and using them successfully in lessons and assessments.

1. **Communication Skills** Exchanging thoughts, messages, and information effectively through interaction reading, writing and using language to gather and communicate information.
2. **Social Skills: Collaboration Skills** Working effectively with others requires language.
3. **Research: Information literacy skills** Finding, interpreting, judging, and creating information.
4. **Research: Media literacy skills** Interacting with media to use and create ideas and information.
5. **Thinking Skills: Critical-thinking skills** Analysing and evaluating issues and ideas.
6. **Thinking Skills: Creative-thinking skills** Generating novel ideas and considering new perspectives.

IB Primary Years Programme (PYP)

In line with the IB PYP, we develop students' use of language, appreciation of language, awareness of the nature of language, of the many influences on language, and of the variety in and between languages and dialects. Through regular teaching and learning we ensure that students understand the transdisciplinary nature of language, use language within and across the subject areas, both inside and outside the classroom. They are encouraged to recognise that competency in language, and in more than one language, is a valuable life skill, a powerful tool both in societal communication and as a means of personal reflection. Furthermore, learning that language and literature are creative processes encourages the development of imagination and creativity through self-expression. Students learn oral language, visual language, written language across and throughout the curriculum.

Oral language—listening and speaking

At AIA we provide meaningful and well-planned opportunities for learners to participate as listeners as well as speakers through debates, show and tell opportunities, elocution competitions, project presentation etc. Oral language involves recognizing and using certain types of language according to the audience and purposes (for example, the language used at home, the language of the classroom, the language of play, the language of inquiry, conversations with peers, giving instructions, interpreting creative texts, the language of fantasy, etc.).

Visual Language—Viewing and Presenting

These processes involve interpreting, using and constructing visuals and multimedia in a variety of

situations and for a range of purposes and audiences. They allow students to understand the ways in which images and language interact to convey ideas, values and beliefs. We create opportunities for students to view and present their work or ideas through advertisements, posters, illustrations, graphic organizers, comics etc. Students get opportunities to explore the function and construction of images to facilitate the process of critically analysing a range of visual texts.

Written Language—Reading

In line with IB PYP and the National Agenda Parameters expectations, reading is an integral part of the curriculum. At AIA reading is embedded in regular lessons, and through a wide range of learning opportunities. We endeavour to develop lifelong reading habits, creating opportunities for learners to have extended periods of time to read for pleasure, interest, and information, experiencing an extensive range of quality fiction and non-fiction texts. As learners engage with interesting and appealing texts, appropriate to their experiences and developmental phase, they acquire the skills, strategies, and conceptual understanding necessary to become competent, motivated, independent readers. We have two well-stocked libraries (Primary and Secondary) with a variety of books of all genres and diverse languages and reading corners in all classrooms. Guided reading is an integral part of the curriculum.

Written Language—Writing

Writing is a way of expressing ourselves. It is a personal act that grows and develops with the individual. Students organize and communicate thoughts, ideas, and information in a visible and tangible way. Writing is primarily concerned with communicating meaning and intention. Children are encouraged to express themselves and reveal their own “voice”, through writing. Writing is an integral part of the curriculum across PYP. In lessons and outside opportunities are created for students to actively share their thoughts and ideas through writing. Students follow the process of planning, drafting, editing, proof reading, revising, and publishing their work. The focus is on meaning rather than accuracy. They are exposed to different genres to add depth. In PYP teachers develop the understanding of the rules of punctuation, grammar, spellings, and handwriting. They incorporate a variety of spelling strategies such as spelling conventions, high frequency words and unit related vocabulary.

IB Middle Years Programme

English Language and Literature

The following guidelines have been identified:

- Literacy develops when language has meaning and purpose
- The five areas: Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing and Viewing, are interrelated
- Communication is a cooperative process in which skills such as critical listening, questioning, persuasion and expressing ideas clearly are necessary
- Literacy skills must be developed across all subject areas
- Students should develop skills in formal and informal communication and in real-world situations
- The curriculum should be sensitive to the needs of all students. World literature (short stories, poems, novels, etc.) should form part of the school syllabus
- The increasing need for computer literacy and the use of technological tools
- End of Year assessments assess students' progress

Arabic

- In MYP Arabic is taught to students from grade 6 onwards in accordance with the MOE requirements for Arab passport holders to learn first language Arabic (A)

Language Acquisition (Arabic, French, English)

- In addition to the compulsory Arabic B up to Grade 9, students will study a second language either French or Spanish.
- In Grades 6, 7 and 8, students will study French or Spanish
- In Grades 9 and 10 students will continue with the same language that they started in Grades 6-8.
- If a student studies a language in Grade 9 and Grade 10, they will not be able to study that language as an Ab Initio language in Grade 11. If the language was only studied in Grades 6-8, they will be permitted to study Ab Initio in Grade 11.
- All other students are required to take Arabic Language Acquisition (Arabic B) as well as one other Language Acquisition subject (French and Spanish) compulsorily up to the end of Grade 9. In Grade 10 the students continue to pursue the selected language under language (French and Spanish) acquisition subject group.
- Students may choose to continue their Language Acquisition subject into Grades 11 and 12 as Language B or choose an alternative Ab Initio subject.

Practices for Implementing Reading, Writing, Oral and Visual Skills

To promote inquiry-based language learning within the context of the MYP, our school recognises the importance of incorporating the teaching and learning of language through each subject discipline as well as the IB Approaches to Learning. The mastery of the essential language skills - reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing - is a vital part of a student's overall development.

Reading practices

- Reading will take place in all subject areas, and students will read across the curriculum whenever appropriate.
- A variety of practices will be used when planning for instruction, including but not limited to, guided reading groups, differentiated reading instruction, word lists, graphic organisers and the use of leveled reading material.
- Students will be encouraged to read for information, read for pleasure, read aloud expressively, discuss, analyse, compare and contrast the texts they read.
- Students will be exposed to a variety of genres, including multicultural literature, poetry, plays, short stories, newspapers, magazines and informational texts.
- Students will learn how to understand, interpret and respond to the ideas, attitudes and feelings expressed in various texts, to think critically about what they read and to be able to make predictions and inferences based on information that is both explicit and implicit in a text.
- Teachers will promote and incorporate supplementary reading incentives and support programmes.
- Vocabulary building techniques will be used across the curriculum whenever appropriate, e.g. word walls, word of the day, spelling programmes, use of idioms, metaphors, and similes.
- Students will participate in Drop Everything and Read for 10 minutes every day in school.

Oral Language Practices

- Teachers will model correct language use in conversation, while being sensitive to students' cultural backgrounds and mother tongues.
- Students will be provided with opportunities to develop and utilise oral language beyond everyday classroom conversations. This will be done through oral presentations, assemblies, debates, speeches, role-play, poetry recitations, songs, books on tape, listening stations and performing arts.
- Teachers will plan activities that expose students to the conventions of oral language and aid them in responding appropriately to a range of contexts and audiences.

Writing practices

- Students' natural desire to communicate through writing will be fostered by giving real purpose to their writing, and by exposing them to varied, challenging and meaningful writing opportunities.
- There will be consistency in promoting the writing process (planning, drafting, editing, proofreading, revising, and publishing) throughout the grade levels.
- Students will be encouraged to focus on meaning first rather than accuracy and to enjoy the writing process.
- Students will be provided with opportunities to express themselves in writing through different genres.
- Students will be provided with opportunities to acquire, develop and use language specific to relevant subject areas.
- Constructive feedback from teachers, peers, and other adults will support the development of writing.
- Teachers will model and provide instruction with the correct use of language conventions, including spelling, grammar, rules of punctuation and handwriting.
- Teachers will incorporate a variety of spelling strategies including spelling conventions and patterns, high frequency words and unit-related vocabulary.

Viewing and presenting practices

- Students will have the opportunity to create visual presentations, and to use multimedia in a variety of situations and for a range of purposes and audiences.
- Opportunities will be provided for students to view high quality performances in a variety of media.

The policy is shared with the school community on Ambassador International Academy's website – www.aiadubai.com.

References and resources:

- IBO, Guidelines for developing a school language policy, IBO, 2008, English
- IBO, Learning in a language other than mother tongues in IB programmes, IBO, 2008,

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- IBO, Language Scope and Sequence (PYP), IBO, 2009, English
- IBO, Making the PYP happen, Language in the Primary Years, IBO, 2009, English
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Reading Programme:

Link to our Reading Policy

Assessment and Reporting:

Assessment and Reporting Policy